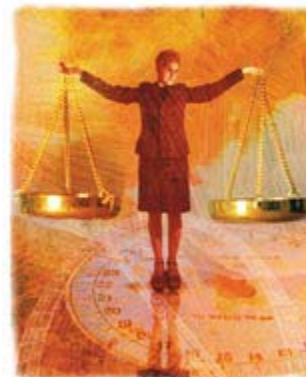


## Faculty Practice

### Leveraging Technology for Learning

David G. Brown

*When strawberries are inexpensive and available, the creative chef delights with strawberry-based recipes. Likewise, this is the era of technology, increasingly inexpensive and available; technology is in season. Our students expect us to use it.*



How can we respond responsibly? How can we take advantage of students' expectations and avoid using technology for its own sake? One approach is to ask, "what can technology facilitate that was before more difficult, more onerous, or more expensive?" Then we can ask, "What changes derived from these practices will increase the quality of learning?" Below are five areas where I have found technology to be an unusually effective tool.

First, I can provide students with a broader view. When a tax cut is in the news, I can point them toward columnists representing both pro and con. Their rough draft work can be critiqued by practitioners. Exercises developed by an economist colleague at another university can be used. Student papers from previous terms can be made available. In short, I can escape the role of being their only authority.

Second, I can individualize assignments and advice. Pre-med students can study the supply and demand of organs for transplant. Theatre majors may study the same topic by analyzing Broadway ticket pricing policy. Perhaps even more importantly, I can answer questions that may be unique to a single student without taking the time of an entire class. I can focus my probing questions at the core of their confusion. I can more easily find time for each student, and let them know I care about them as an individual.

Third, students can be asked to do more on their own. I can insist that each student respond to a probing question. I can expect students to connect with professionals in the field. I can have a student-manager-

of-the-week summarize the concerns of other students. I can expect term papers to include a treatment of the subject in both text and picture. Students can be expected to archive copies of their papers and routinely consult an ever-changing syllabus, to help with course administrivia.

Fourth, it is much more realistic to expect students to collaborate on assignments, to teach each other the material. They can more easily connect, even when separated by time and place. I can more easily observe the contribution of each individual, as well as the final result of the group work. The management and monitoring of study groups is more feasible. Interaction between myself and these students teams can become the norm.

Finally, my materials can be more timely. Weather data can be today's weather. Economic issues can be today's news. Even in the midst of a class session, the resources are available to support an unexpected turn in the discussion.

As many other professors find slightly different but equally compelling ways that technology supports learning, it should be no surprise that students are expecting more technology. No wonder that almost no professor who once incorporates technology into teaching, later abandons it. We have more options and we're using them.

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